

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) made the following statement recognizing the importance of Human Trafficking Awareness Day:

“Human trafficking is a global crime and yet most Americans do not realize that the United States is one of the biggest hubs for trafficking of persons. Florida is a major human trafficking destination and is rated as one of the top four ‘destination states’ for domestic trafficking. I was dismayed to hear that a chief assistant U.S. attorney who has prosecuted multiple human trafficking crimes deemed South Florida the ‘ground zero for modern slavery.’

“I believe that we have a responsibility to make ourselves aware of the tragic circumstances taking place here in the United States from children being forced into prostitution to workers exploited in the fields and in factories.

“I encourage all Americans to join me in recognizing the efforts of government workers and nongovernmental organizations that are dedicated to identifying these victims and their fight to shut down the over \$10 billion human trafficking industry.

“Awareness is the best form of prevention and I am proud to be a part of the movement to bring light to this domestic crisis today. In the next few days, I will be launching a new page on my website (www.alceehastings.house.gov) that will shed light on this issue and provide my constituents and other readers with ways in which we can all play a role in preventing and putting an end to this tragic form of modern day slavery,” said Hastings.

There are an estimated 27 million people in slavery around the world. The Florida Department of Children and Families’ *Protections for Child Victims of Human Trafficking Information Kit* reported that an estimated 14,500-17,500 people are “trafficked” annually in the United States, 80 percent of which are women and children. Identified trafficking victims in Florida have included: women from Latin America and Eastern Europe; as well as U.S. teenage runaways forced into prostitution; male and female immigrant farm laborers from Central America; Eastern European women exploited while working in hotels; U.S. citizens who are homeless men recruited as farm laborers; and girls from Haiti, Honduras, and India held as house slaves.

For more information, please visit <http://nhtrc.polarisproject.org/> .

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